

Called To Be Saints

The beatification ceremony of Pope John Paul II was held this morning (May 1, 2011) in the city of Rome, presided over by Pope Benedict XVI. A total of 87 international delegations attended the ceremony, including 22 world leaders. Thousands of pilgrims, many of them from John Paul's native Poland, spent the night in sleeping bags on bridges and in piazzas around town, and then packed St. Peter's Square as soon as the barricades opened. More than a million Catholics gathered for the mass, and a giant portrait of the former Pope brought cheers, tear and applause from the crowd as it was unveiled. A vigil in preparation for the celebration was held the night before in the Circus Maximus; the casket in which he was interred was exhumed two days ago and was placed in front of the main altar for public veneration during the ceremony. A vial containing the late Pope's blood, taken during the final days of his life, was displayed as a relic for veneration at the ceremony. Pope Benedict put John Paul on the fast-track for sainthood when he dispensed with the traditional five-year waiting period and allowed the beatification process to begin just weeks after his death on April 2, 2005. He was responding to chants of "Santo Subito" ("Sainthood Immediately") that erupted during John Paul's funeral. In today's ceremony, John Paul II was declared "blessed" which is the last stage before his canonization as a "saint" of the Catholic church. For this "beatification" to take place, a person must be credited with a miracle by the Catholic Church. Pope Benedict ruled last year that John Paul II had miraculously cured a French nun of Parkinson's disease after his death, a condition that he also had suffered from. Now to achieve "sainthood" the late pope will need to perform a second miracle, also from beyond the grave.

Sadly, absolutely NONE of this is in the Bible.

The word "saints" in its English form occurs most frequently in Paul's epistles, 40 times out of a total of 62 times in the entire New Testament. It is basically always a plural word (except Philippians 4:21, where he says "salute every saint"). Among Catholics, the term "saint" has only a technical connotation, referring only to one who has been officially canonized by the church. But it is obvious (and contradictory!) that the Bible uses the term as a general designation for ALL Christians.

The Greek word is the adjective "HAGIOS" which means "HOLY." Hence, the word "saints" means literally "set apart for God, to be, as it were, exclusively His." The primary meaning of the word "holy" throughout the Bible is that of "SEPARATION (apart, withdrawal)."

Today, the word "saints" has fallen into disuse in the church, in favor of words like "believers" – but the Bible makes no distinction whatsoever!

According to German theologian Hermann Cremer, "As God's holiness becomes sanctification, and believers are received into the fellowship of the redeeming God ... the predicate 'hagios' is suitable of them also, seeing that it expresses the special grace which they experience who are in the fellowship and possession of New Testament salvation."

Of the word "saints," English theologian William Vine states, "In the plural, as used of believer, it designates ALL such and is not applied merely to persons of exceptional holiness." ALL CHRISTIANS HAVE THE PRIVILEGE OF BEING "HOLY" – "SET APART" UNTO GOD!

Turn and say to someone nearby, "Hello, I'm Saint So-And-So" !!! DID THAT FEEL AWKWARD? BUT IT IS ABSOLUTELY TRUE!

The Old Testament contains many references to the **SAINTS** ...

Psalms 30:4 Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.

Psalms 31:23 O love the LORD, all ye his saints: for the LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.

Psalms 34:9 O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him.

Psalms 37:28 For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.

Psalms 50:5 Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.

Psalms 132:9 Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout for joy.

Psalms 132:16 I will also clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.

Psalms 145:10 All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD; and thy saints shall bless thee.

Psalms 116:15 Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.

ILLUSTRATIONS: SAINTS WHO FINISHED THE RACE WELL!

I can only find a handful of places in the Bible where someone was "called to ministry" and NO place where someone was "called to preach sermons" – but there are DOZENS of places where we are "CALLED" to fulfill our role as the SAINTS of the Most High God!

Romans 1:7 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, **called to be saints**: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:2 Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, **called to be saints**, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:

Ephesians 1:18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his **calling**, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the **saints**,

1 Thessalonians 2:12 That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath **called** you unto his kingdom and glory.

2 Timothy 1:9 Who hath saved us, and **called us with an holy calling**, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,

1 Peter 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath **called** you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

The most important calling is NOT your calling to a certain ministry role within the body of Christ. THE HIGHEST CALLING IS THE CALL TO BE A SAINT OF GOD! There is nothing more important in the kingdom of God or in the local church than a faithful saint!

Ephesians 2:19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

Jude 1:14 And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints,

Revelation 5:8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.

Revelation 19:7-8 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE FIVE-FOLD MINISTRY?! That is very important in the leadership of the church, but the entire concept is buried in a passage about the SAINTS!

Ephesians 4:1-12 ¹ I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are **called**, ² With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; ³ Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are **called** in one hope of your **calling**; ⁵ One Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. ⁷ But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. ⁸ Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. ⁹ (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰ He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) ¹¹ And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; ¹² For the perfecting of the **saints**, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

Thumb Finger	Apostle	touches all other ministries
Index Finger	Prophet	gives direction
Middle Finger	Evangelist	reaches furthest
Ring Finger	Pastor	in covenant with local church
Little Finger	Teacher	brings balance

VERSE ELEVEN IS NOT A THREEFOLD JOB DESCRIPTION FOR THE FIVEFOLD MINISTRY! The leadership of the church is given one task – to mature the saints, who then do the work of the ministry!

THIS IS REALLY THE SIXFOLD MINISTRY! SAINTS ARE NOT JUST “CHURCH MEMBERS” WHO ATTEND AND GIVE IN THE OFFERING – THEY ARE “ABLE MINISTERS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT”!

1 Chronicles 16:21-22 He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reprov'd kings for their sakes, Saying, **Touch not mine anointed**, and do my prophets no harm.

Psalms 105:14-15 He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reprov'd kings for their sakes; Saying, **Touch not mine anointed**, and do my prophets no harm.

“MINE ANOINTED” DOES NOT REFER TO PREACHERS (THAT WOULD BE “PROPHETS”) – IT REFERS TO SAINTS!

Malachi 3:10-11 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And **I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes**, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts.